

TALKS



*Use the talents you possess,
for the woods would be a
very silent place if no birds
sang except the best.*

Henry Van Dyke

© 2003 California State Parks



Module 6

What is it? personal verbal interaction with park audiences

Why do we do it? to increase appreciation and enjoyment of park resources

How do we do it? through formal and informal discourse



A good talk entertains and informs. A great talk starts out by entertaining, moves on to interpreting, and ends by inspiring.

Introduction

Talk is the most basic element of personal services interpretation. Through the power of speech and the nonverbal adjuncts associated with our delivery, we attempt to “light the spark” of curiosity and wonder. Good communication helps visitors become so familiar with a resource/environment/park that they want to forge their own path of discovery. In the previous modules, we discussed in general terms the whats, whys, and hows of personal interpretation. In the next five modules we will address the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities for presenting talks, walks, campfires, children’s, and roving programs. Before we embark onto new territory, following the principles of good interpretation, we will recap a little of what we have already learned.

Interpretation is an artful form of communication that stresses ideas and relationships, not simply isolated facts and figures. This is most frequently done through the use of hands-on illustrative media, first-hand experiences, and/or the use of physical objects. Good interpretation communicates the science of the natural and cultural world to an audience in a manner that is provocative, interesting, and leaves them wanting to discover more.

Interpretation is not the same as teaching. The people who attend interpretive programs are there because they want to be there (noncaptive audience). There are no externally motivating factors keeping an audience from leaving. Because of this, one of the most important things to remember is the “priceless ingredient” Tilden talked about—*love*. Love will allow you to be enthusiastic, knowledgeable, engaging, and to communicate effectively with your audience. We have seen that to effectively communicate you must establish all the elements embraced in **RAPPORT**. With this in mind, we will now focus on the most fundamental tool of the interpreter—the talk.



Types of talks

Talks can be either formal, focused, site-specific presentations or informal, spontaneous dialogues. Whether formal or informal, your talk should help visitors move from satisfying their basic needs to fulfilling their growth needs, the ultimate being self-actualization (see Module 3-Communication, p. 3-2). There are many types of talks that are conducted in diverse venues and presented to many different types of audiences. We will now discuss a few of the ways to classify interpretive presentations.

Formal

A formal talk consists of a structured presentation to an audience where the interpreter has developed a program with a prepared theme, introduction, body, and conclusion. There are numerous venues for formal talks. Here are a few.

Walk/hike/tour

We inclusively call walks, hikes, and tours *walks*. Taking your talk “on the road” provides the opportunity to involve the audience directly with the resource being interpreted. The interpreter guides the audience through a series of thematically planned and well-researched stops. Walks are covered in detail in Module 7-Walks.



Site

The purpose of the site talk is to interpret what has happened, is happening, or might happen at a specific location. The site talk may include a demonstration, results of research, or it may feature a specific location focusing on natural and/or cultural topics.

Campfire

A campfire talk, steeped in tradition, is a multisensory and participatory opportunity to interpret park resources to a diverse audience. Campfire talks may utilize audiovisual equipment, guest speakers, demonstrations, storytelling, and a host of other imaginative and creative media in an evening of fun, education, and interpretation. Module 8-Campfire details the techniques and skills of the campfire talk.



Children

Talks to children, while encompassing all the RAPPORT elements, are designed and delivered to an audience that has specific needs, developmental phases, and desires. A children’s talk should not be a “watered down” version of an already existing program, but a talk developed especially for children. Children’s interpretation is covered in detail in Module 9-Kids!.





Types

Classroom

The classroom provides a venue for integrating our park messages with academic content standards. Ranging from elementary to college classes, classroom talks provide an opportunity to present park themes, discuss pre/post park visits, and encourage park advocacy.

Speaking engagement

Speaking engagements in the community afford excellent opportunities to connect with constituents who may not routinely visit parks or attend our formal programs. These outreach experiences provide opportunities to present park topics and issues, develop support for park programs, and extend an invitation to the community to visit their park and recreation areas.

Spontaneous

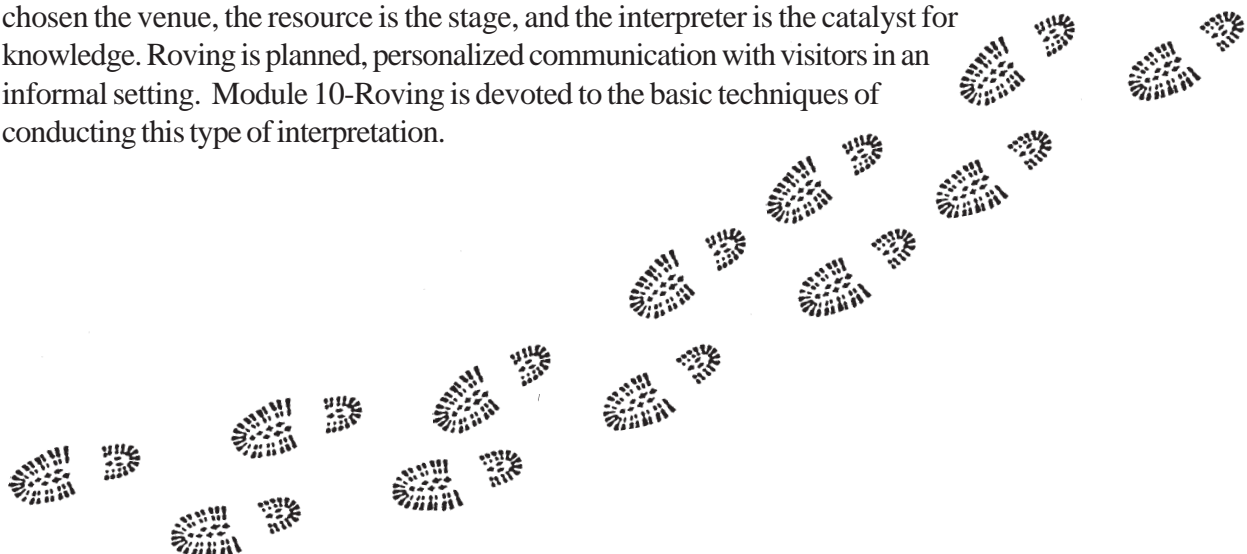
Spontaneous or informal interpretation is a natural, spur-of-the-moment type of dialogue with individual visitors. The encounters may or may not be planned, but in most instances the questions and information requested by the visitors can be anticipated. This type of visitor contact has more of a natural conversational progression. Following are the two most common locations of spontaneous interpretation.

Visitor center

One of the most common places for providing information and orientation to the visitor is the visitor/information center. The key here is to provide interpretive answers, not just give facts. Module 3-Communication reviews some techniques useful to accomplishing this goal.

Roving

Roving interpretation is personalized, face-to-face communication where the audience has chosen the venue, the resource is the stage, and the interpreter is the catalyst for knowledge. Roving is planned, personalized communication with visitors in an informal setting. Module 10-Roving is devoted to the basic techniques of conducting this type of interpretation.





Planning

We know *why* we want to provide a good talk. We want to connect the visitor to the resource and to protect and manage that connection within management guidelines (Module 2-Purpose and Value). Now we will briefly review how to go about planning and presenting a good talk. In Module 4-Planning we learned to incorporate a systematic process of researching, designing, and preparing for interpretive programs. When preparing your talk you must know the park, the significant features and their importance, have an understanding of your visitors' needs and motives, and incorporate management goals and objectives.

As we learned in Module 5-Programs, there are basic building blocks of successful interpretive programs regardless of the delivery form. To prepare our talk we must conduct thorough research, develop a theme, and prepare an introduction, body, and conclusion.

Preparation is the key to success. Being prepared is the best way to combat nervousness and promote self-assurance. Research and study your topic thoroughly. As you begin to really *know* your subject, you will gain confidence and eventually reach a point where you will be eager to deliver your talk.

Research

Through primary and secondary research, we begin to really know the resource, the visitors, and the management goals for interpretation. In Module 4-Planning, we saw that good research is critical to developing a successful interpretive talk.

Theme

The theme is the anchor point to which all of the information presented in your talk will relate. It is the message of the program. In Module 5-Programs, we learned that the theme is the one defining characteristic that separates all other communication forms from that of interpretation. We use themes in talks for three key reasons: to help us identify the message or “big picture;” to focus our attention and guide our research; and to provide the overarching organizational structure for the program.

2-3-1 rule

A logical approach to developing your talk is Sam Ham's 2-3-1 rule: introduction is #1, the body is #2, and the conclusion is #3. So develop the body first, add a strong conclusion, and then prepare your introduction, bringing the audience full circle with the presentation.

The knowledge that most of the audience regards you as worth listening to even before you open your mouth should increase your confidence.

Grant Sharpe



Planning

Steps for planning a talk



- **Choose a topic.**
- **Research, research, research.**
- **Develop a theme** – your message.
- **Summarize the entire talk in one short paragraph.**
- **Develop the talk using the 2-3-1 rule.**
- **Develop the body** (theme/subtheme or narrative).
- **Construct the conclusion** (closure, full circle, moral/“needle”).
- **Compose the introduction** (state the theme and main points, and set the stage for the conclusion).
- **Rearrange the parts in proper order and establish smooth transitions.**
- **Practice, practice, practice!**
- **Choose an intriguing title for your talk.**

adapted from Sam Ham

Getting started

It is much better to outline your talk than to write it out completely. If you do write it out, don't try to memorize it, and don't plan to read it word for word. A canned speech sounds like a canned speech. It is not conversational, friendly, or wise. Interpreters who memorize their speeches are under pressure to remember every line. If they fall out of sequence, they often panic and become completely lost. Forgetting even one word of a memorized speech can be disaster. If you feel you must write the talk word for word, make an outline, *then throw the written version away*. The outline should consist of your theme and subtheme elements, introduction, and conclusion. Practice without extensive notes. Use just the major points (subthemes) as your guides. Develop focusing sentences, thematic connectors, and transitions (see Module 5-Programs, p. 5-11). Make it your goal to feel comfortable enough with the main points, transitions, and the flow of your presentation that you talk with your audience as if they were friends. If you *must* memorize something, limit memorization to the outline, transitions, and your opening and closing statements.

Another instance when memorizing the script may be beneficial is when using quotes, but be careful. If you use a quote be accurate; do not paraphrase or misquote the person. Quotes can be extremely powerful, especially when they directly relate to your topic. Incorporating the voice/dialect of the person you are quoting certainly enhances the reality. A good technique is to let historical characters speak for themselves through their letters, diaries, and other documents.

Use note cards sparingly. They may come in handy and be appropriate for your program agenda, long quotes, and/or the basic outline (subthemes) of your presentation, but avoid having too many as crutches. Once again, they may get out of sequence and cause you to panic.



Practice

Practice is a crucial step in the transition phase between planning your talk and actually delivering it. There is no substitute for actual practice. Do not just mentally rehearse, but actually stand up, as if an audience were in front of you, and practice. Go through your entire program, using visual aids and body and facial gestures. Anticipate where and when you will have questions. Visualize yourself walking into the room, introducing yourself, delivering your talk, fielding questions, and concluding the presentation.

A minimum of five rehearsals is recommended and more is desired. However, be careful not to practice so much that it becomes memorized. If possible, have friends and/or co-workers watch and critique your presentation. If you can, videotape your practice sessions. This videotape combined with a critique from an outside observer will allow you to modify and adjust your program more easily. Videotaping and/or recording your talk are excellent practice techniques.

Rehearsals take many forms

- **Personal** – Intellectually and physically work out the progression and details of your talk. Work with your notes, talk to yourself, and go back and forth to work out what words, actions, and props work best. Stop as many times as necessary to make corrections.
- **Technical** – Complete verbal program without full development of props, anticipated Q/A, and costume/uniform.
- **Dress** – Complete program without stopping including props, Q/A, and in costume/uniform. Videotaping this form of rehearsal is beneficial.

Take advantage of every opportunity to practice in front of strangers. Force yourself to speak to groups even if you are really frightened. Even the greatest orators get nervous. They overcome their fear by conscious effort and practice. *You can do the same.* Practice, practice, practice! Through practice and preparation, you will begin to deliver your talk in a more natural manner, as though talking with friends about a subject on which you are passionate.

Overcoming stage fright

Stage fright is normal. Almost all of us share this anxiety and fear of speaking in front of an audience. Even the most seasoned professional actor may have a nervous stomach, sweaty hands, tremors in the knees, or an accelerated heart rate before each performance. The trick is to use this excess adrenaline to your advantage. “This kind of ‘arousal,’ as psychologists call it, makes us more alert, more focused and less likely to forget—even though we feel just the opposite” (Ham, 1992, p. 69). Recognize that stage fright stress is normal, and make it work *for* you. Let the heightened sensitivity and energy fuel a more enthusiastic and dynamic presentation.



Planning

Tell yourself to breathe. When your muscles tighten and you are anxious, you may not be breathing deeply enough. Focus on relaxing. Remind yourself that you are prepared. The audience is on your side, and they want you to succeed. Give yourself some flexibility. Do not lock your knees or maintain a rigid posture; move around a little and allow your muscles to release the tension. Moderation is the key, so do not pace wildly back and forth either. Smile and watch the audience smile back at you. We will talk a little about eye contact and body language later in this module, but for now remember, this anxiety is normal and you can overcome it. (Although you may feel like it, you will not die!)

Presentation tips

We will now discuss how to make sure your appearance and demeanor serve to improve your reputation and approachability as a professional interpreter. We will visit this topic again in Module 13-Professionalism.

Benefits of arriving early

Plan to arrive early for your talk. Just how early depends on several factors: location, preparation needs, and familiarity with the venue and potential audience. Specific types of talks will be discussed more thoroughly later, but for now just know that arriving early allows you to gain confidence, and when it is time to start the program, you are prepared and ready to go. It also affords you the opportunity to talk informally with visitors and establish a rapport. It eases your anxiety, and lets you learn about your audience. Knowing whom you are talking to lets you personally tailor your presentation. Through personal conversations, you directly learn information about individual wants, needs, and expectations. Through observation, you indirectly gather information about the composition of the audience including age, gender, ethnic composition, etc. Understanding your audience is important. Remember Tilden's first principle, "Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile" (Tilden, 1967, p. 9).



Relax! The audience is on your side.

First impressions

First impressions are very important. Your audience begins assessing you the moment they meet you. Arriving at the talk location early helps establish your dependability. Your posture, uniform, and voice reinforce and enhance credibility and confidence. Your eye contact, smile, and warm welcome radiate approachability.



Make a good impression

Just as you will be observing the audience and determining their wants, needs, and interests, they will be assessing your competence, approachability, and professionalism. First impressions are important. Departmental uniform and grooming standards enhance your credibility. The uniform and the regard in which the public holds the Department and its employees lets you begin your talk with a high level of acceptance. Personal habits, voice, enthusiasm, and presentation style can reinforce or shatter the positive respect the audience has for you.

Your credibility, personality, competence, and sincerity manifest themselves in your communication skills, both verbal and nonverbal. In Module 3-Communication we discussed credibility and how content, confidence, and appearance impact a visitor's perception of you. Let us briefly revisit how to improve your nonverbal messages.

We communicate a lot of information with our bodies, faces, hands, and posture. When interacting with an individual or a group, always stand up straight, do not slouch. Look at your audience and smile. "Some experts claim that fifty-five percent of understanding from messages is from facial expressions, not words" (Regnier, et al., 1994, p. 26). Avoid distracting mannerisms, such as body swaying, fidgeting, pacing back and forth, hands in pockets fumbling with keys and coins, etc. You communicate positive signals with good posture. Use tasteful, appropriate, and slightly understated hand gestures to punctuate and illustrate points in your program. Do not hesitate to walk toward your audience to focus attention and make personal connections, but be careful not to intimidate them. Once again, be aware of and practice/rehearse good nonverbal skills. In addition, your attitude is extremely important. Assume a friendly, confident, and enthusiastic demeanor. When you have a positive attitude, all the planning and mechanical details of a talk will come easier and more naturally.

An interpreter acts out of authority and humility; confidence and compassion; respect for others and one's own integrity; stability and enthusiasm; and joy. An interpreter treats others with kindness.

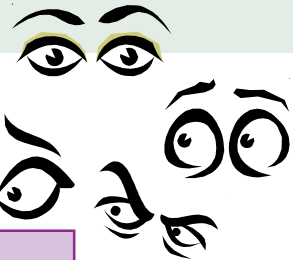
Larry Beck and Ted Cable



Planning

Personal style

How you come across to your audience is influenced by a combination of your environment, education, and personality. We have all inherited characteristics, been influenced by different experiences, and have a personal “comfort zone.” We are unique. When developing your personal style, borrow techniques that you like from other speakers, but do not try to copy them. Let your own personality shine through.



Personal characteristics that affect communication

- Voice quality
- Body language
- Accuracy
- Appearance
- Eye contact
- Passion
- Sincerity
- Uniform
- Title



Always exhibit competence, approachability, and professionalism.



Who is the audience?

Constantly gauge your audience's reaction to determine their level of enjoyment and understanding. Knowing, or at least anticipating, an audience's response will guide you in preparing future programs. The language, complexity of issues, and examples that you use to clarify points must be at a comprehension level that is appropriate for your audience. For example, if a large percentage appear to understand only limited English, it would not be effective to present a talk full of terms that they can not understand. As a general guide, plan your presentation for the 8th grade level, and then adjust as needed. With these groups, using Standard English and avoiding slang is especially important.



Visitors speaking a foreign language

- **Use a language interpreter if one is available.** Reduce your content by about half to allow for translation time. It is better for the group to understand half of the program well, than to hear it all from you and not understand anything.
- **If you do not have a translator, ask a member of the group to help.** If they do not feel comfortable translating every word, he or she can still be a valuable ally in conveying key concepts. Some individuals are very shy about being in the spotlight. Do not insist if the person asked refuses your invitation to translate.
- **Even scant knowledge of a language is usually appreciated.** Do not be afraid to try out your high school language skills!
- **Use pantomime.** It is fun and often engages the group to try it themselves.
- **Ask how to say something in another person's language, then repeat it.** Even if (and perhaps *especially* if) your attempt is clumsy, the group will appreciate you for trying. Good words to start with are "please" and "thank you." Not only will these prove useful, they also demonstrate respect.
- **Build a library of foreign words and phrases that pertain to your topic.** Keep them on notecards and refer to them when appropriate.

paraphrased from Michael Green



Planning

Voice and verbiage

Your voice and verbiage are very important to conveying that friendly, approachable, personal warmth you want to exhibit. You are not talking *at* the audience, but *with* them; there is a huge difference. Endeavor to use the same conversational style in your talk as you would with a group of your friends. Speak clearly, avoid using jargon and scientific terms, and do not forget to breathe. Avoid repeating words or phrases such as “actually,” “basically,” “uh,” “um,” or “ah.”

Develop your voice

Pleasant – Conversational, friendly
Natural – Spontaneous and not contrived
Audible – Articulate with appropriate volume
Compelling – Makes audience want to listen
Eloquent – Actively conveys meanings and feelings

Express your talk in a conversational style, using the full range of your voice. The manner and skill with which you use your voice influences the audience’s perception of your credibility and its comprehension and retention of the theme. There are several methods you can use to enhance the delivery of your talk.

Delivering your talk

- **Rate** - Most people speak 120 to 180 words a minute. Vary the speed at which you talk, but do not speak too fast. A constant rate is monotonous.
- **Pitch** - Tonal variations and volume should also vary. A constant pitch is monotonous.
- **Articulate** - Enunciate so that each word is heard correctly. “Speak clearly; this is particularly important in large reverberant rooms.” (Green, 2002)
- **Breathe** - A relaxed voice with controlled breathing is easier to understand and not as stressful for the speaker or the listener. Short sentences with pauses and periods help; don’t run on and on.
- **Quality** - Emphasis, force, expression, and clarity make all the difference in the effectiveness of a talk.



Even if you possess a strong, audible voice, there are times when the audience will not easily be able to hear you. Be constantly aware of your surroundings and any distractions that may make it difficult for the audience to hear. When you are speaking to a large group, or when the ambient noise level is high, a microphone can be a useful tool. Refer to Module 11-Audiovisual for tips on the proper use of audiovisual equipment.

It is important that you face your audience. This directs your voice towards the audience, and if any participants need to, it allows them to lip read or infer what you are saying. Do not have anything in your mouth while you are speaking. Items such as gum, a toothpick, or a cigarette can be very annoying and may reduce your ability to enunciate clearly. They



It is important that you face your audience.

also sabotage your credibility and professionalism. How you express yourself helps your audience to be open and receptive, understand what you are saying, and relate to their personal experiences. The words and phrases you use make a difference.

Most often, when conveying facts and numbers, it is best to generalize, but there certainly are exceptions. For example, gold was discovered in California in 1848, not the 40s; water freezes at precisely 32 degrees, not the low 30s. Conversely, in many instances, rounding numbers is less tedious and distracting. For example, 397 species of birds should be rounded up to 400 and 14,010 acres should be rounded down to 14,000. Decisions about whether or not the exact number or an average or rounded number is better will only come through knowing your resource and the importance of the facts you are conveying. Where possible, put numerical information into a context to which the audience can relate. For example, to help them relate to how much food a hawk must eat each day in order to survive, you might say something such as “a hawk eats half its body weight every day. If I were to do that I would have to eat 75 pounds of food. Let’s see... that is about 150 hamburgers a day!”

All Visitors Welcome addresses another terminology concern, “The recommended way to refer to people with disabilities is to put people first; for example, ‘people with hearing impairments.’ It is not appropriate to say, ‘hearing-impaired people.’ It is important to remember that people with disabilities are individuals, who do not all act, think, or move alike. Therefore do not refer to them as ‘the disabled,’ or ‘the mentally retarded,’ etc. Do not use words which are degrading, such as crippled, defect, wheelchair-bound, confined to a wheelchair, invalid, victim of..., or suffering from.” (Porter, 1994, p. 7). The trick is to always think of people first!



Planning

First person–characterization

Besides our actual physical voice, there is another “voice” we can use in our interpretation. The voice of first person interpretation is that of an individual from a specific time or period. This type of interpretation is also known as *living history*. For this to work well, you must *become* the person who lived or was at the site. You must not only accurately look like the character, but your speech, dialect, vocabulary, and style must also be an accurate reflection of that era. First person interpretation may use a “canned presentation,” but more commonly relies on interaction with the audience. When you interact with the audience, you should acknowledge only things from the appropriate time period. For example, you are portraying a rancher’s wife baking bread in an adobe oven. An audience member says something about storing bread in the freezer. You know nothing about a freezer, but you could say that the rodents tend to burrow into the basement cold storage area so bread does not store well. First person interpretation takes considerable research, concentration, theatrical skill, and practice to stay in character. Although it is one of the most difficult “voices” to master, when performed correctly, first person interpretation can be a powerful presentation tool.

First person interpretation generally requires another person to prepare the audience, “set the stage,” and close the program. Without someone to provide a cognitive map to the program, visitors may not understand the depiction and may become confused or feel disoriented.

Third person–costumed interpretation

Third person interpretation uses a costume and associated items as props for the time period being discussed. The interpreter does not need to become a certain character, and the dialogue and discussion can be in more modern terms. Visitors generally find it easy to interact and ask questions of someone doing third person, costumed interpretation. Craft and skill demonstrations are certainly enhanced when the interpreter dresses in suitable clothing and uses authentic looking tools and props. Third person interpretation allows more comfortable interaction with the audience and may be more effective at conveying a given message.

In essence, living interpretation involves on-site re-creation of the lives of a people, wearing their clothing, speaking their dialect, reviewing their decisions.

Grant Sharpe



Storytelling

The age-old practice of storytelling has been traditionally performed around a campfire, but a good story, well prepared and practiced, can be told any time and anywhere. Review the storytelling section in Module 8-Campfire for a general discussion on storytelling. In this section we will focus our discussion on exercises and techniques for using your voice to full advantage.

As a storyteller, your goal is to become, for a brief moment, something other than a man or woman standing in front of the room—to create a whole new world using words, sounds, gestures, and expressions. To hear a story is an ancient longing, to tell a story an ancient skill. A well-told story can move you to laughter or tears, it can explain or cause you to ponder the wonders of the universe.

Linda Yemoto and Simone Dangles

Storytelling tips and techniques

- **Relaxation exercises**—Take a moment before starting a story to relax your body. Use exercises to release tension.
- **Humming exercises**—Storytelling and any public speaking require a strong voice. One way to strengthen and not strain your voice is to hum. Try changing the volume, pitch, and expression in your voice as you hum.
- **Different parts of your voice**—It is important to be aware of the different types of sound you can make with the parts of your voice. The nasal long “eee” sound comes from the front of your head or through your nose. The long “aaa” sound comes from the front of your mouth. The “ahhh” from the back of your throat, the “ohhh” from your chest, and the deep short “uuu” from way down in your stomach.
- **Inflection**—Use inflection to keep an audience interested and to sustain a feeling or mood. Drop your voice only at the end of a complete thought.
- **Diction**—Your language must be understandable for the audience. Improve your diction by repeating tongue twisters such as, “Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.”
- **Facial expression**—Practice expressing different emotions, feelings, attitudes, etc., using only your face. Try showing anger, disgust, joy, surprise, excitement, pride, and sadness for a start.
- **Character assumption**—Learning how to “take on a character” is critical in becoming an effective storyteller. Your character may be the narrator of the story, or it may be one of the principal figures in the story.

adapted from Linda Yemoto and Simone Dangles



Planning

Storytelling is especially important in cultural settings. New stories can and should be developed based on good research. Interpreters need to understand the techniques of storytelling and then develop stories for that location.

Karen Beery



A second interpreter enhances first person characterization.

Storytelling cautions

- Talking in a monotone.
- Using a fake or affected voice.
- Talking too fast or meandering verbally.
- Using limp or repetitive gestures.
- Insulting other cultures.
- Teaching misinformation about nature.
- Over-anthropomorphizing wildlife.
- Telling stories you don't like.

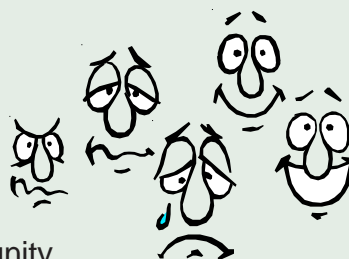
Regnier, et al.

Interpreter Ron Russo, East Bay Regional Parks, believes there is a general tendency for all audiences to wander simply because we speak at a slower rate than minds think. People's thoughts drift to new, unrelated areas or different things to do. The physical signs are obvious to the alert interpreter. For example, fidgeting, looking around, talking, and walking away are all symptoms of mental distractions. Following are his suggestions for regaining the audience's attention and keeping it.



Audience attention getters

- **Change your voice and pace of delivery.**
- **Stop and tell a story.**
- **Ask a question...**put them on alert status.
- **Select someone for a little roleplaying.**
- **Use a quote.** ””
- **Pull out a handheld object or tool.**
- **Make a spontaneous discovery**–“Oh, look over there.”
- **Change your facial expression.** Get dramatic!
- **Direct the action.** Stay in charge. You are the producer.
- **Be enthusiastic.** Share your excitement at every opportunity.
- **Recognize and praise someone.** “Oh, what a great idea...”
- **Follow their energy and interests.** What appears to be a distraction can be a great discovery, if you make it one.
- **Use pauses and silence to emphasize a point or attract attention.**



adapted from Ron Russo

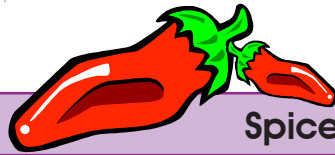
Add pizzazz

There are many ways to stimulate interest and add excitement to your program. An easy attention getter is a sentence that is outrageous, rhymes, or is startling. Say something that really captures the audience’s interest and makes them want to listen. You might use foreshadowing, which is an early reference to something that you will talk about later. This teaser adds mystery and suspense, and enhances curiosity. It provokes the audience to listen carefully and solve the problem. A riddle, a brainteaser, or a trivial pursuit challenge helps to heighten interest and encourage interaction. Providing your audience with clues in the body of your talk helps them solve the mystery at or prior to your conclusion. You might use a phrase that is repeated and gains power with each repetition, e.g., “I have a dream.” You might use a turnabout; start a line of thinking in one direction and then abruptly change, or you might use a long silent pause.

Incorporate humor into your talk, as long as it relates to your theme. Humor can add light-heartedness to your presentation and help establish RAPPORT. With that said, use humor very carefully. California State Parks employs you as an interpreter, not a stand-up comic. Something funny to one person may be offensive to the next. A humorous story about your personal experiences or observations that directly relates to your theme can add insight and humanize your presentation. If the humorous story is to illustrate a point, the “punch line” should not be at your audience’s expense. Remember, befriend your guests and make them feel at home and important.



Planning



Spice it up

- **Choose words carefully**, they can make a world of difference. Use active, descriptive words to verbally show an idea, not just tell about it. For example, instead of saying, *She tried not to indicate how much my words hurt her.* Say, *As I finished speaking, she lowered her eyes and turned away. In a whispery voice she said, "Looks like it might rain later."*
- **Use descriptive verbs instead of adjectives and adverbs.** For example, you might say, *The deer ran away scared.* By saying, *The deer froze, then leaped the fence and bolted across the meadow,* you paint a much clearer verbal image.
- **Avoid the verb to be (is, was, were), whenever possible.** For example the statement, *It was a dark and stormy night,* doesn't help the audience visualize as much as, *The storm raged all night; only the lightning lit my way through the forest.*
- **Use active voice for power and strength; use passive for soft, vague effect.** *The grass was bent low by the wind* is an example of describing a scene in a passive voice. An example of active voice might be, *The wind pressed the grass close to the ground.*
- **Use simile or metaphor to enhance your descriptions.** *The man hopped around and waved his arms* is not as descriptive as the following simile, *The man hopped into the air and waved his arms like a giant prehistoric bird straining to take off into the wind.* Metaphors work well also, *He was a giant prehistoric bird straining to take off into the wind.*

adapted from Jane Vander Weyden

Questioning techniques

The technique of questioning involves and intellectually stimulates the audience. Open-ended questions entice visitors to share their knowledge, thoughts, and feelings. Questions are either open or closed-ended. Open-ended questions ask for opinions and feelings, and generally stimulate creative thinking and discussion. Closed-ended questions ask for direct, short, factual type responses; e.g., yes/no, or the answer to who, what, or where.

Use questions to help the audience

- **Focus**—by describing, naming, observing, recalling, etc.
- **Process**—by analyzing, comparing, explaining, grouping, etc.
- **Evaluate**—by imagining, predicting, theorizing, extrapolating, etc.



It may seem obvious, but when you ask a question, give your audience enough time to answer. Unless you are asking a rhetorical question, you should allow five to 15 seconds for the audience to think about it, formulate an opinion, and verbalize a response. Direct questions to, and encourage responses from, various members of the audience. Do not let one or a few individuals dominate the conversation and interaction. Do NOT put anyone on the spot by directly singling them out, unless you are sure they will be able to answer the question easily. If no one answers your question, rephrase it or leave it open and answer it later in your talk. Try not to answer your own questions. The open question becomes suspenseful foreshadowing. It is important to accept answers gracefully, even if the response is incorrect. “I never thought about it that way...” or “That’s an interesting perspective...” are methods of gingerly accepting a *wrong* answer. Use follow-up questioning or rephrasing to gently arrive at the correct answer.

There are many ways to answer a question

Always rephrase and repeat a question from an audience member. This helps ensure that you understand the question being asked and that everyone in the audience heard the question you are responding to. If you do not know the answer to a question, do not bluff or fake it. Say you do not know. Ask if anyone in the audience has the answer, and if not, make arrangements to provide the answer at a later time. Sometimes it is prudent not to answer the question directly. Help the audience discover the answer on their own with a little encouragement from you. If the question will be answered later in your talk, let them know you will be answering it shortly.

Answering techniques are very important. Act the role of a person who is hearing the question for the first time. Interpreters in the cultural setting get into the habit of explaining everything in the room that they know will be of interest to the visitor. Interpreters need to allow the visitors to ask questions. We need to encourage a conversational style, participatory with the audience, not a lecture.



Planning

You have heard the question a thousand times! By the end of the season, you will probably know what questions the audience will ask before they ask them. It may be a challenge to respond as if it is the first time you have ever heard the question. Remember, be a good host. It is the first time that particular individual has asked a question, and he/she deserves a clear, courteous answer.

Before we move on to the mechanics of giving a good talk, let us review the elements needed for a good delivery.

Incorporate RAPPORT elements

- **Put “spark” in your presentation**—The priceless ingredient is love.
- **Smile**—55 percent of communication is unspoken.
- **Vary your voice**—Monotone induces sleep, not interest.
- **Talk with your audience, not at them.**
- **Speak from the heart, not your notes.**
- **Face your audience when speaking.**
- **Exhibit positive body language**—Use appropriate gestures.
- **Don’t memorize your talk**—Remember your outline.
- **Make smooth transitions.**
- **Employ good questioning techniques.**
- **Add pizzazz**—Incorporating suspense, mystery, foreshadowing, humor, and active words.
- **Have an ending that punctuates your theme and closes the program.**
- **Remember, stage fright is normal**—Use the energy to your advantage.

Have *FUN* – it shows!

Success may breed excess. Gratifying and flattering feedback tempts interpreters to do more. However, interpreters must be vigilant against giving the public too much of a good thing. An old showbiz adage says to “leave the audience wanting to come back for more.” This is sage advice for interpreters.

Larry Beck and Ted Cable



Mechanics

All of your planning and preparation efforts will begin to pay dividends when you actually present your talk. There are several techniques you should employ that will add to your program's success. We will take a moment to look at them.

Before the talk

As we previously discussed in Module 4-Planning your talk actually begins before the announced program time. Always arrive early so you have plenty of time to check your equipment, props, and the setting. If you are presenting your talk at a location you are unfamiliar with, such as an off-site speaking engagement, it is very wise to visit the location before the presentation. Room layout, location of switches and plugs, audiovisual concerns, etc., should all be addressed long before the actual presentation. If this is a group booked by reservation, the interpreter may want to call ahead to learn about the group's expectations or goals. Arriving early also provides time to socialize and establish a rapport with individuals before they become your audience. Knowing your audience is vitally important. You gain information about your audience via visual and spoken clues. At the same time your audience is gaining confidence in you. You represent California State Parks. Your appearance, knowledge, demeanor, approachability, and many other factors ensure a good impression. Be prepared and set a high standard of excellence.

Be a good host

Think of yourself as the host and the audience as your guests. Have everything ready when your guests arrive. Greet them and exude a warm welcome; a smile is a great charmer. As we discussed earlier "fifty-five percent of understanding...is from facial expressions, not words" (Regnier, et al., 1994, p. 26). Acknowledge everyone, whether personally or visually; make a connection and offer a welcoming gesture.

How is a smile like a talk?

Both should be:

Sincere

Meaningful and memorable

Inviting and interesting

Lasting, loving, and linking

Endearing, easy, educational, and engaging



Don't worry...be happy!



Mechanics

Begin your talk on time. Part of being a good host is introducing yourself, formally welcoming the audience, having an attention grabber, providing information about the theme and subthemes, telling them why you are giving the talk, and presenting a cognitive map.

After the talk

A conclusion should provide a clear ending to the program by summarizing the theme, thanking the audience members for attending, and giving them a sense of completion. Offering a philosophical thought that sends them on their way with “food for thought” is also a very effective ending technique. Your conclusion might also entice visitors to learn more about the subject. Announce additional interpretive programs and other resources that are available. Invite them to stay and talk.

Inviting the visitors to linger and chat is just good manners. You can overtly state that you will remain for a while and are open to discussion. Or you can simply remain in the area and be receptive to the visitors. A gracious host attempts to satisfy their guests’ needs. Simply saying “that’s all folks” and leaving does not allow for that informal socialization with the interpreter that many visitors crave and on which good interpreters thrive. This kind of interaction helps you evaluate the program’s content and your delivery skills. Do not forget to include appropriate evaluation measures.

We will offer some more specific techniques on how to end your talk later in Modules 7-Walk, 8-Campfire and 10-Roving. However, always remember that many elements remain constant throughout *any* presentation.

Remember to . . .

- **Begin and end on time.**
- **Tell them what you are going to tell them** (introduction).
- **Tell them** (body).
- **Tell them again** (conclusion).
- **Support your theme with a good story.**
- **Always be a good host.**

It ain’t over ‘til it’s **OVER**

- **Evaluate the program** (formal/informal, audience/self).
- **Record interpretive data** (DPR 918).
- **Secure/store/replenish materials and equipment.**
- **Follow-up considerations** (for visitors, staff, self)



Props

A good interpreter employs a number of well-chosen tools in an effective talk. Your voice, your body language, your questioning skills, and your enthusiasm are just four of the tools you constantly have available to you. There are hosts of other aids or props that you can employ to help illustrate and accentuate the theme of the talk. Remember, props are just *aids* to the presentation. Props help *tell* the story; they are not the story.

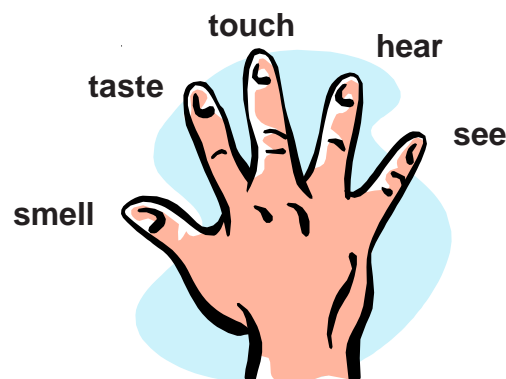
Activating all the senses creates a holistic experience for the visitor.

Larry Beck and Ted Cable

Props can be real items, reproductions, representations, or graphics. Use props to involve all the senses in your talk; incorporate props that can be smelled, heard, touched, tasted, and seen. This will greatly improve theme comprehension and retention. Where possible and prudent, use the real thing. For example, it is much more effective to let the visitors smell the fragrant bark of the Jeffrey pine rather than to tell them it smells like vanilla. Hearing the chimes of the old clock on the mantle helps envision quieter days. Tasting that exquisitely ripe blackberry right off the vine has much more impact than hearing someone's description. We will look at how props can be incorporated to effectively engage the senses and heighten understanding.

...the basis for 'ACCLIMATIZING' is natural awareness through use of personal senses (i.e., touching, tasting, hearing, smelling and seeing), using all senses to pursue natural awareness "until we return to that childlike innocence and harmony – only on a higher level" as an adult.

Bill Krumbein and Linda Leyva





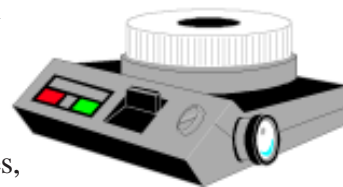
Mechanics

Visuals

Visuals may be two- or three-dimensional. For example, you could use an illustration, photograph, slide of an object (two-dimensional), or you could use the actual object (three-dimensional). Generally, it is much more effective to use the real item rather than a facsimile, but that is not always possible. Sam Ham references experts who believe visual aids increase retention and comprehension by as much as 50 to 200 percent. However, if your visuals are poorly designed or displayed, they may draw attention away from you and work against your intended goal. Visuals should function as tools to clarify your theme. They should enhance what you are saying without distracting the audience's attention.

Illustrations

Projected slides are common visual aids that make graphics large enough for all to easily see. We will cover how to prepare a slide presentation in more detail in Modules 8-Campfire and 11-Audiovisual. Let us discuss how other illustrations can support your theme.



Select your illustration prop carefully. First and foremost, make sure that all of your audience can see it clearly. It may seem obvious, but pictures, posters, maps, and other visual aids must be large enough for your audience to see. Limit the amount of information you present with any one visual aid. For example, limit the text to a line or two on any one graphic. Too much reading becomes too much like school. If you do use text, the font size and style of the letters should be appropriate for the visual. Use a sans serif font, one that is easy to read such as arial. Avoid using complicated graphs and charts, because they are too difficult to decipher at a glance (no more than six rows or columns should be used on any one graph). Incorporate extra lighting, projection devices, magnifying glasses, etc., where appropriate to enhance visual acuity.

Objects

When using handheld objects, be sure the background and lighting are suitable. Hold the object steady, generally at shoulder level, and deliberately point out features and details. Slowly rotating objects allows for visual relationships to be grasped. If the item has a human use, show or pantomime that use. Appeal to the audience's imagination where possible. Ask questions about the item to engage their thoughts. For example, you are showing the audience an antique apple peeler that was a common tool in 19th century farm life. It is a complicated combination of wheels, cogs, and prongs. Ask if anyone knows what this tool might have been used for. Provide clues to help them guess correctly; a bowl of apples nearby may just do the trick! Then actually peel an apple or use gestures to indicate how the tool was used. If appropriate, invite a volunteer from the audience to try it. Have them comment on how hard or easy it is to use.



References

Field guides, local flora and fauna keys, architectural digests, "how to" manuals, copies of diaries and letters, and other topic-related references provide visitors opportunities to discover details. Interested individuals can discover additional information beyond that which you are able to present to



the general audience. Having these in your “kit bag” of tools is appropriate and professional.

Let the visitor know where they can purchase or obtain the reference if they desire. This practice is extremely helpful to increase the take-home value of a program. It can also be beneficial to everyone if the item is available in your bookstore. If you think an item is good enough to use as a reference in your kit bag, the visitors may very well benefit by having one of their very own.

Audio

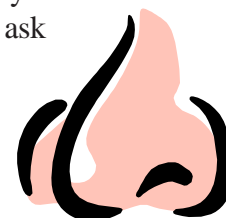
Incorporating sound into your talk certainly enhances another dimension of understanding. Stopping to listen to the natural or ambient sounds should be a normal occurrence for the seasoned interpreter. You can enhance the audience’s ability to hear sounds with various techniques and tools. Have visitors cup their hands near their ears, or put their ears to the ground or tree and listen intently. Ask everyone to close their eyes and listen to often unheard sounds. In this all-too-busy world, the art of just listening to the tick of a clock, birdsong, or rushing water is often forgotten by our visitors and overlooked by the interpreter. Listening can be a vital component of the story.

Including mechanical devices such as tape players, stethoscopes, bat detectors, or parabolic recorders can help “capture” sounds not normally heard by visitors. Use all the tools available to improve the experience and illustrate the theme.

Smell

Inviting your audience to experience the aromas of the environment is another effective presentation tool. The stuffiness of the cellar, the pungency of creosote, or the musk of the elk are all smells the visitor will not soon forget. How you employ and deliver these and other smells requires careful planning and forethought. While there is no substitute for the real thing, keeping the cellar door closed, rubbing the leaves of the creosote, or bottling the musk oil of an elk are all ways to artificially incorporate smell stimuli into the interpretive experience.

Modeling how the audience should smell the item reduces anxiety. Instead of simply handing the person something to smell, show them how to approach it. Any time you ask the audience to do something, always demonstrate it first. For example, instead of telling the audience to stick their noses in the Jeffrey pine bark, simply walk up to the tree, hug it, put your face right up to the tree, take a deep breath, and say “ahhhhhh.” Once they know it is safe, they will be far more relaxed and willing to experience the smell.





Mechanics

What's ambrosia to one, stinks to another. As with all audience considerations, use good judgment, and do not force, shame, or embarrass anyone into smelling, tasting, or touching any of your props.

Taste

Tasting things is a tricky proposition. To the untrained eye, plants that are poisonous may easily be confused for safer ones. In addition, tasting things in front of children often promotes a dangerous message. Choose carefully what tastes you share with visitors. If done wisely, there are life experiences to be had! For example, that city dweller who tastes a ripe wild huckleberry may now be able to understand why a bear is so focused. Someone who has never tasted a cattail "corncob" may finally understand how innovative the hunter/gatherer cultures were.

Taste, like many other senses, is not generally incorporated into an interpreter's talk. It is difficult to do effectively, a little scary, and may not always produce the desired effect. But when you use it and it works, you just may have connected the visitor with the resource in a way they will never forget.

Tasting in the wild

- **Do not encourage tasting unless you are absolutely sure it is edible and safe.** Not even a small piece
- **Just because animals eat it doesn't mean you can.**
- **Harvest with respect to the resource and the law.**
- **Explain to visitors why and how you are ethically harvesting.** For example, advise your audience to take only every fifth blackberry to ensure enough for others, for animals, for reseeding, etc.
- **Just because it tastes good does not make it safe.**
- **Always give a warning about look-alikes and dangers of eating in the wild.**

Touch

Incorporating tactile sensation is extremely successful at reinforcing messages. For example, touching the ground to test the temperature with one hand in the sun and the other in the shade clearly illustrates the difference a tree can make. The rough texture of bark or the smoothness of polished marble cannot be explained any better than by touch. Touching the hairs on plants shows how they manage to "hitchhike" on your socks and disperse widely.



Touch is a powerful sensory stimuli.



Engage and involve the audience

Select props/aids/specimens that are large enough to be seen and relevant to your talk. Have your props laid out in their order of appearance, but generally it is best to keep them hidden until you are ready to exhibit them. This provides suspense and lessens distractions. When using props, do not get into the “this is a...and this is a...” mode of explaining the objects. Remember, good presentation techniques include transitions, foreshadowing, questioning, and relevance to theme. The prop should be an integrated part of your program, not just a “throw in” gadget.

Continue to talk to the audience when you use props. Maintain eye contact with the visitors, not your props. Only occasionally glance at the prop to identify points of interest and to add emphasis. Use slow, deliberate hand movements when identifying the feature you are exhibiting. Be careful to position yourself so that you do not block anyone’s view.

Whenever possible, let visitors feel, smell, and handle the objects you are discussing. However, use caution when passing objects through the audience. If it is a small group, you might consider waiting until everyone has had a chance to observe the object. If possible, have an object for each member of the group to explore and discover.

Handout materials are good tools to help engage and involve the audience, but distribution is an issue. Handouts may be beneficial for providing supplemental information and helping with recall at a later date. They also offer some take-home value. How and when you distribute the handout materials requires forethought and good techniques. Distributing the material at the start of the talk may relax the audience and make them more receptive to listening, but might also distract their attention away from your presentation. Passing the materials out during the talk may clarify or help illustrate your theme, but the timing and continuity of your presentation may be thrown off. Waiting until the end of the program may reinforce your presentation and provide additional information, but might also just be something that distracts from your strong conclusion. Use handouts wisely.



Costumes are great props, but remember to maintain eye contact with the audience.

Kit bag

Props, aids, gadgets, and all sorts of paraphernalia help the interpreter reveal the true essence of the story. Over time, interpreters develop their own personalized kit bag of tools with items that work for them for any given situation, topic, and location. Freed and Shafer list 66 items they suggest could go



Mechanics

into your kit bag, and Krumbein includes 74 cultural and historic items. Both articles are certainly worth reviewing. Other information on interpretive techniques can be found in *The Interpreter's Guidebook* (Regnier, et al., 1994).

Tricks of the trade

Every interpreter will have special issues and concerns to address. Many times we develop props that work specifically to illustrate a point. For instance, California State Parks Interpreter Michael Green has included a "tool" in his kit bag that he finds very useful. Working in historic structures where marble is abundant, Michael realized visitors instinctively want to feel the smooth, cool marble. He carries a piece of marble in his kit bag which he invites everyone to touch. Over the years, the oils from all this touching has discolored the demonstration marble, offering a perfect opportunity for Michael to explain why we ask visitors not to touch the marble walls.

Whether you use an all-purpose day pack, a treasure trunk, or an under-the-counter drawer to store your kit bag of tools, you will find that you constantly draw on them to help illustrate your talk.





Other considerations

Distractions

Accidents, emergencies, and other distractions are going to happen. You and other staff should have contingency plans in place to handle accidents and emergency situations as efficiently and professionally as possible. Depending on a host of variables (radio/phone, proximity to assistance, seriousness of emergency, etc.) how you handle the situation will be dictated by your skill, judgment, policy, and planning. Preplanning is paramount.

Distractions and disruptions to your talk come in many forms. The crying baby, the loud talker in the back of the room, or an overly energetic child will all test your skill and professionalism. By using your pleasant people skills you can often quickly correct the problem. The bottom line is, maintain a professional manner and deal with the problem—do not just ignore it. Your audience and you deserve better. Good judgment, a calm demeanor, and appropriate action when handling disruptive issues are skills you will refine as you gain experience. Observe other interpreters as they handle various situations, and discuss solutions with them.

Accessibility

The interpreter must incorporate accessibility when presenting a program. Accessibility is often thought of in terms of providing physical access to facilities. “The Americans with Disabilities Act not only addresses the issue of physical access to buildings, but also considers the need for equally effective communication with people with disabilities and program accessibility” (Porter, 1994, p. 53). “It means being able to get to the door, through the door, to the second floor, and to participate, independently, and with dignity” (Stensrud, 1993, p. 103).

As state parks interpreters we “must ensure that communications with individuals with disabilities are as effective as communications with others” (Porter, 1994, p. 53). “Good interpretation always relates the message to the audience, communicating in a way that is both understandable and provocative to the individual listener. This requires that the interpreter be sensitive to the interests and special needs of the entire audience” (Porter, 1994, p. 55). In *All Visitors Welcome*, you will find information that looks beyond the federal and state laws for accessibility. You will also find ways to more effectively communicate with a diverse audience (Porter, 1994).

As the interpreter, it is your responsibility to be familiar with and follow the “letter of the law” for program accessibility. Provide programs where all visitors are included in the interpretive talk. Personal integrity and professionalism also dictate that you embrace the “spirit of the law” with your best interpretive efforts. Incorporate accessibility along with all of the elements of RAPPORT for all members of the audience.



Distractions may be momentary, but if you are losing the audience's attention, revise your approach.



Other considerations

Evaluate

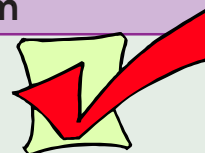
How do you know you are a good interpreter? How do you assess whether the audience is enjoying, understanding, and learning from your talk? Self-evaluation should be a continual routine. You should always strive to improve on your last visitor interaction. In Module 12-Evaluation we will thoroughly discuss self-evaluation and other assessment tools in detail. We will discuss numerous methods that will help you and your supervisor effectively evaluate your interpretive performance.

For now, let us briefly focus on what indications you can look for from the audience—signs that provide evidence that your talk is effective and well presented. Earlier in this module, we discussed the signals you send with your body language. Your enthusiasm, attention to detail, and confidence help the audience appreciate and benefit from your presentation. Conversely, the audience sends signals that can help you adjust your talk appropriately. Evaluation of an audience's reaction as the presentation proceeds is a traditional, gut-level assessment of the success of your program. Pay attention to the audience for clues on how well you're doing.

Gather formative feedback during the program

Are audience members:

- **Smiling**, applauding, and laughing at the appropriate times?
- **Attentive** and making eye contact with you?
- **Sharing** their knowledge and opinions, and being actively involved in the program?
- **Asking** questions based on their enlightenment?
- **Participating** when asked?



Or are they:

- **Fidgeting**, distracted, or having other conversations while you are talking?
- **Constantly** asking you to clarify what you said?
- **Leaving** before the talk is over?
- **Not** looking at you?

Gather summative feedback after the program

Did your audience:

- **Linger** and visit, ask questions, and cheerfully interact with you?
- **Look** at or take materials you offered as additional information?
- **Thank**, compliment, or ask you about other program opportunities?

Or did they:

- **Leave** immediately.
- **Ask** questions you thought you had already addressed in the talk?
- **Seem** confused about the subject?

Other considerations



Reading body language is an imperfect art. Your perception of someone's body language could be wrong. Body language varies based on culture, the person, and the place. In addition, body language signals may have more than one meaning. Now the goal is to gain insight from the silent signals of others. You should incorporate clues provided by the whole picture when attempting to evaluate the situation. For example, if one person is distracted, your program may be just fine. But if numerous people are not paying attention, you should seriously consider revising your presentation content, style, or methods.

Certainly this gut-level, traditional evaluation method has benefits and pitfalls. It is extremely important that you also employ more scientific methods of evaluation to accurately assess your performance. Incorporating the techniques, methods, and tools offered in both Module 12-Evaluation and in the Department's *Aiming for Excellence* will assist in improving your interpretive presentation.

Our job is to integrate these various truths into the whole truth, which should be our only loyalty.

Abraham Maslow

Bias and “truth”

Dealing with bias and the “truth” can be difficult. Bias is prejudice, and each individual's truth is in the “eye of the beholder.” Bias can be overt or unintended, verbal or nonverbal, and in written or graphic form. For example, personal communication bias may be exhibited through such actions as addressing your comments exclusively to the men in your audience, not making eye contact with individuals with physical disabilities, or not directly addressing a person of a particular ethnic group. Interpreters must constantly endeavor to identify and then remove bias from their presentations. NPS interpretive training Module 201 offers the following forms of bias, prejudice, and stereotyping. Take the time to reassess yourself if you recognize any of these in your style:

Verbal

- **Speaker's point of view**—From what perspective does the interpreter speak? What assumptions does she/he make about the topic and audience?
- **Pronoun usage**—Are masculine pronouns used when referring to gender-neutral objects? Are feminine pronouns used diminutively?
- **Euphemisms**—Are euphemisms used to diminish the import of sensitive or controversial issues e.g., slaves/servants?
- **Terminology**—Are terms used with cultural sensitivity?



Other considerations

Nonverbal

- **Eye contact**—With whom does the interpreter make the most eye contact?
- **Body language**—What does body language communicate about accessibility/inaccessibility or interest/disinterest?
- **Gestures**—How are gestures used to prompt or silence members of the audience? To communicate interest/disinterest?
- **Positioning**—Where does the interpreter spend the most time?
- **Inclusion**—Who gets called upon? With whom does the interpreter spend time? What questions are asked of different students/visitors?

National Park Service

Truth, especially in the cultural sense, is determined by the historical context in which it occurred. Remember in Module 2-Purpose and Value we discussed that history is not a fact, but rather an interpretation of the event by the person who recorded it, the time in which it occurred, and those of us who are listening to it today. As more historical information is discovered, the interpretation of that event is altered. There are always many perspectives from which to tell a story. Be careful that you accurately reflect the culture and the historic facts and are not simply playing into stereotypes. Avoid dogmatic certainty when interpreting a historical event. Incorporating qualifiers such as: “*Based on what we now know...*” or “*It appears that...*” will provide the caveat for additional “truths” to be discovered.

Publicizing

You may have prepared the most wonderful interpretive program, but if no one attends because they do not know about it, what good is it? Informing your potential audience about the *when*, *where*, and *why* of your program is extremely important to its success or failure. There are numerous options for “getting the word out.”

Personal invitations, bulletin board postings, and advertising through the media are the primary avenues for publicizing interpretive programs. Timely, attractive, and attention-getting correspondence will make the difference in whether your announcement provokes much interest. Let us look at some effective methods of publicizing interpretive programs.



Invite the media to attend and publicize your programs.

Other considerations



Activity schedules

Design activity schedules with the visitors in mind. Do not forget that staff, including volunteers, other agencies, the media, and other audiences will use them as well. The normal *what*, *when*, and *where* issues need to be addressed in an understandable and brief manner. This does not mean that the program announcement should look like a timetable. Your program title should make individuals curious and want to attend your program. The title should convey the essence of your theme, if not the theme itself. The write-up should be short, enticing, and informative.

How you advertise programs potentially determines your audience. All activity schedules should incorporate the 4Cs: clear, concise, correct, and compelling. Use active, eloquent, and positive statements to describe your program offering. Select words that are exciting, informative, and hint at the mysteries of the topic. Words such as discover, explore, reveal, realize, unearth, etc., are likely to entice visitors to attend. Terms such as study, learn, investigate, and research sound like you are presenting a lecture. Remember, your audience is probably on vacation. They may not mind learning something new, but they probably do not want to work *too* hard at it.

Here is an example of an activity announcement for one day. Other announcements on the page should have similar formatting.



10:30 a.m.

Walk

***Indians, Explorers, & Settlers: 400 year conflict* 1 hour**

Join volunteer Lee Smith on a moderately difficult 1-mile amble, exploring sensitive locations that have experienced cultural clashes for centuries. The walk begins in front of the visitor center. Bring water and wear comfortable walking shoes.

3:00 p.m.

Junior Rangers

***Peninsular Bighorn Sheep – Myths and Marvels* 1 hour**

Children ages 7-12 are invited to join ranger Chris Doe investigating the life, legends, and amazing mysteries of the largest park mammal. Meet at the campfire center.

7:30 p.m.

Campfire

***Bats of Borrego and Beyond* 1 hour**

Bats are in the air, everywhere! Join interpreter Pat Jones for a bat patrol at the Mott Campfire Center. Discover why these mysterious night hunters are disappearing, why that is bad, and how you can help save them.



Other considerations

Bulletin boards

Bulletin boards are often the most underutilized and neglected communication media in parks. Generally, bulletin boards are used to orient visitors and communicate basic rules and information. Organizing attractive, functional bulletin boards for quick scanning and recognition of topics is our ultimate goal. Do whatever it takes to make it easy for visitors to find the information they are looking for and need to know. But do not forget, as we discussed in Module 3-Communication, most visitors only read about 30-40 seconds worth of material. Bulletin boards that are divided into distinct sections, using color and graphics to attract attention, greatly assist the visitor to locate information. A picture is worth a thousand words. Visitors may give up finding needed information if the bulletin board is a jumble of stapled pages. Clearly identifying your program activities using active titles that reflect your theme and vivid, descriptive, concise information will make the bulletin board more approachable.

Media releases

Advertising your interpretive programs outside of the park is a great way to attract the local public and a wider audience than might otherwise attend. The Department's media guide provides direction, structure, and format assistance when writing these Public Service Announcements (PSAs). In addition, most districts have a Public Information Officer (PIO) who will be able to assist you in developing your information. Putting the *what, when, where* information in the beginning paragraph is always prudent. Use PSAs for all media including newspapers, magazines, radio, and television. Working with your PIO, develop a good, effective relationship with your local media. Know what type of information they desire and what their deadlines are.



Advertise your interpretive programs through the local media.

Personal invitations

The finest and most direct method to publicize your interpretive programs is through warm, sincere, and personal invitations. Do not forget to occasionally invite the local media to your programs. Personal invitations to visitors can be extended while the individuals are attending another program, at staffed entrance stations, visitor centers, and park offices. They can also be extended in casual chance meetings and while roving. In Module 10-Roving we discuss the benefits of contacting park visitors in diverse locations throughout the park. Realizing that only about 20 percent of park visitors attend our formal programs and that bulletin boards are often underutilized, your personal communication with some visitors may be the only way they learn of the park's interpretive program offerings. Be a good host.



What's ahead



Our next module will help you develop your skills for conducting a walk, which is nothing more than a “moving talk.” A walk offers you the chance to directly introduce the visitor to the resource. It can take many forms. We will take a close look at how to lead an exciting, effective, engaging walk.



Literature cited

- Beck, Larry, and Ted Cable. *Interpretation for the 21st Century*. Champaign, IL: Sagamore, 1998.
- Beery, Karen. Personal conversation with California State Parks Interpreter, Southern Service Center, 2002.
- Freed, M., and D. Scafer. "Gimmicks and Gadgets." *The Interpreter* 13, no.3, 1982.
- Green, Michael. Personal conversation with California State Parks Interpreter, Capital District, 2002.
- Ham, Sam. *Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People With Big Ideas and Small Budgets*. Golden, CO: North American Press, 1992.
- Krumbein, W. "A Gimmicks and Gadgets Potpourri." *The Interpreter* 14, no.4, 1983.
- Krumbein, W., and L. Leyva. *The Interpreter's Guide*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1977.
- McDonald, Linda. *Aiming for Excellence: An Evaluation Handbook for Interpretive Services in California State Parks*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2000.
- National Park Service. "Interpretive Competencies." Training Module 201. *Interpretive Development Program*, 1997.
- Porter, Erika. *All Visitors Welcome, Accessibility in State Park Interpretive Programs and Facilities*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 1994.
- Regnier, Kathleen, Michael Gross, and Ron Zimmerman. *The Interpreters Guidebook: Techniques for Programs and Presentations*. 3rd ed. Stevens Point, WI: UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc., 1994.
- Russo, Ron. "The Tendency to Wander." Mott Training Center Handout. Pacific Grove, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation. 1999.
- Tilden, Freeman. *Interpreting Our Heritage*. Rev. ed. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1967.

Literature cited



Sharpe, Grant. *Interpreting the Environment*. 2nd ed. New York, NY: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1982.

Stensrud, Carol. *A Training Manual for Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance in Parks and Recreation Settings*. State College, PA: Venture Publishing, Inc., 1993.

Weyden, J. *Writing the Landscape*. Handout. Wyoming: Audubon Camp in the Rockies, 1994.

Yemoto, L., and S. Dangles. "Storytelling – Be a Better Bard." Handout. Berkley, CA: East Bay Regional Park District, Tilden Nature Area, 1980.



Additional references

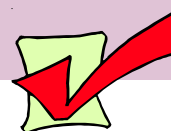
- Brown, Vinson. *The Amateur Naturalist's Handbook*. New York, NY: Prentice Hall, 1980.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Park to Park Index: A Reference Guide to California State Parks*. Sacramento, CA, 2000.
- California Department of Parks and Recreation, *Public Relations Handbook*. Sacramento, CA, 1990.
- Grater, Russell. *The Interpreter's Handbook: Methods, Skills, and Techniques*. Southwest Parks and Monument Association, 1976.
- Roth, Stacy F. *Past into Present: Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.
- Storer, John. *The Web of Life*. New York, NY: New American Library, Inc., n.d.
- Van Matre, Steve. *Acclimatization*. Eagle River, WI: Towering Pines, 1972.
- Van Matre, Steve. *The Earth Speaks*. Warrenville, IL: Acclimatization Experiences Institute, 1983.

Talks





Self assessment



Answer each question in the section below before reviewing the material in Module 6–Talks . The answers are not provided. Check your answers with your colleagues and as you read Module 6–Talks. Items from the self assessment may be reviewed and discussed in class.

- 1) Which of the following should not be memorized when preparing for a talk?
 - a) Introduction
 - b) Transition sentences
 - c) Outline
 - d) Body of the presentation

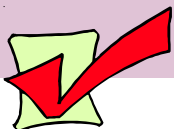
- 2) Writing out a complete script for a talk is a good way to practice. (Explain your answer.)
 - a) True
 - b) False

- 3) Name three different general types of interpretive talks.

- 4) List two ways to help alleviate stage fright.

- 5) On average _____ of the understanding from messages comes from facial expressions.
 - a) 25%
 - b) 35%
 - c) 45%
 - d) 55%

- 6) Which is a recommended practice for dealing with visitors speaking a foreign language?
 - a) Make no modifications
 - b) Use popular slang
 - c) Incorporate pantomime
 - d) Simplify the content



Self assessment



- 7) How does first person “living history” differ from third person, costumed interpretation?
- 8) Circle all of the following that are recommended strategies for developing storytelling techniques.
 - a) Humming exercises
 - b) Memorizing the stories you tell
 - c) Relaxation exercises
 - d) Practicing different facial expressions
- 9) Props are a necessary part of every interpretive presentation.
 - a) True
 - b) False
- 10) List four types of props.
- 11) Reproductions of authentic objects should never be used in programs.
 - a) True
 - b) False
- 12) Which of the following are appropriate methods of publicizing programs. (Circle all that apply.)
 - a) Bulletin boards
 - b) Personal invitations
 - c) Media releases
 - d) Entrance station handouts

Now that you have completed the self assessment questions, review the material in Module 6-Talks to confirm your answers. After reading the module, move on to the workbook learning activities, which will assist you in developing your skills.



Workbook learning activities



To help you review and apply the material covered in Module 6-Talks, a selection of review questions and/or activities is provided. Again, no answers are included. Use the material from the module, outside sources, and your colleagues to help you complete the activities and answer the questions. There may be more than one right answer. Use the questions and activities to generate discussion about the material. Be prepared to discuss, perform, or demonstrate your answers in class.

- 1) Much of what we interpret for the public is factual information about our resources. Making numbers, dates, and other detailed facts understandable to visitors is a key part of “interpreting” the information. How could you interpret the following concepts for an audience?

Temperatures can reach 105 degrees.

The tallest redwood is more than 360 feet tall.

It is 200 miles away.

The lake is 250 feet deep.

This park has 450 miles of trails.

Gold was first discovered in 1848.

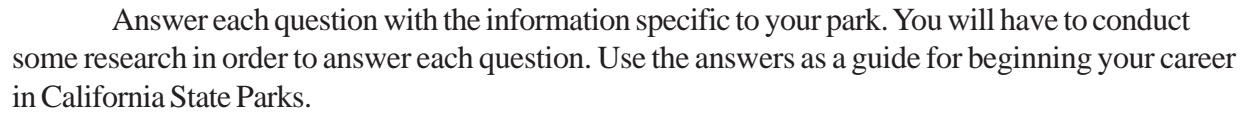
Eighty-six million people visit California State Parks each year.

It happened more than 250 million years ago.

California State Parks has more than 275 park units.

Dragonflies can lift seven times their body weight.





Park name _____

- ## Talks/Student Workbook



Take it to your park



3) List four ways you could engage visitors with the resources being interpreted.

4) Design two ways to publicize the program.